



Generational Differences

Beth Sonntag, M.Ad.Ed., Director
Greg Gale, Program Coordinator
Teaching and Learning Center



Goals for session

- Overview of generations and approximate birthdates
- Insight into defining events, characteristics, and values of each generation
- Considerations for teaching and learning in school and workplace



Questionnaire . . .



Generation

- A group of people born within a particular timeframe (approx. a 20-year period) who share a common context of experiences, beliefs, values and preferences.
- Share a common location in history via trends and events that occur during formative years; result in attitudes and choices that characterize a generation

Generations in America Today

- Traditionals 1900 – 1945
- Baby Boomers 1946 – 1964
- Generation X 1965 – 1980
- Generation Y/Millennials 1981 – 2002

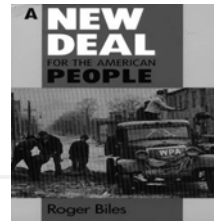
The Traditionals

- 1900 – 1945
- Ages 64 – 109, 75 million
- Two generations lumped together based on similar experiences
- "Greatest generation", "Silent Generation", Veterans, GI Generation



Defining Events

- World War I
- World War II
- Great Depression
- New Deal



Characteristics / Values

- Work together for the common good
- Duty, honor, economy, courage, service, love of family and country and above all, responsibility for oneself.
- Hard work, loyalty, respect for rules
- No safety nets; no "bail outs"
- Dedication, sacrifice; duty before pleasure

Baby Boomers



- 1946 – 1964
- Ages 45 – 63, 69 million
- Baby boomers – “me” generation , Boom generation

Defining Events

- Defining events
 - Korean War
 - Vietnam War begins
 - Space Travel
 - Assassinations
 - Women’s Rights Movement
 - Television
 - Civil Rights



Characteristics / Values

- Optimism – “The American Dream”
- Idealism
- Devotion / Involvement
- Competitive
- Opportunities
- Personal gratification
- Want to leave their stamp on things



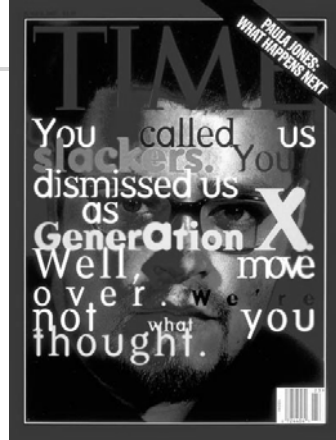
Generation X

- 1965 – 1981
- Ages 28 – 44, 46 million
- Twenty something
- First wave of Boomer children



Defining Events

- Challenger Disaster
- Fall of the Berlin Wall
- AIDS
- The Clinton Administration
- Desert Storm
- Energy Crisis
- "latchkey kids"
- Technology: cable/sat. TV, PCs, fax, pager, cell phone



Characteristics / Values

- Skeptical
- Disillusioned
- Individually motivated
- Transient workforce
- Demand balance
- Question authority
- Fun / informal

Generation Y / Millennials

- 1982 – 2001
- Ages 8 – 27, currently 33 million
- Generation “lap” – close to parents
- NetGen, Digital Generation, Next Gen



Defining Events

- Space Shuttle Accident
- Surfing the internet – most significant
- 9/11
- End of Cold War
- School shootings
- OKC
- Clinton – Lewsinky
- Technology: iPod, iPhone, laptops, PDAs, digital camera – all in one!

Characteristics / Values



- Optimistic
- Confident
- Experiential Learners, collaborative
- Move between Real and Virtual
- Multi-taskers
- Achievement oriented
- Respect for diversity, tolerant
- Respectful but now awed by authority

Application to the classroom . . .

| Traditionals | Baby Boomers | Gen Xers | Millennials |
|---|--|--|--|
| Lecture Style is acceptable | Include team activities in teaching methods | Include lots of activities and individual reports | Use technology and lots of variety in teaching methods |
| Respect their experience and opinions | Let participants experience different team roles | "One solution" to case studies is unacceptable | "One solution" to case studies is unacceptable; want casual discussion |
| Will arrive at session early | Will want social time during session | Start on time/ end on time expectation | Start on time but may be late/end early expectation |
| Will be respectful in evaluation comments at end of session | Will want to evaluate at end of session and at follow-up times | Will provide feedback during the session and won't patronize teacher | Will provide feedback during the session and expect praise for it |

Bridging the Generation Gap, Gravett / Throckmorton



Millennials and Learning

- Strengths
- Challenges
- Opportunities



Strengths

- Experiential learners
- Collaborative style
- Multi-taskers
- Techno savvy
- Diversity experts



Opportunities

- Enhance learning tools
- Incorporate reading/reflection
- Use experiential learning activities
- Team learning
- Service learning



Challenges

- Process: action vs. reflection
- Critical thinking
- Need for structure
- Consumers
- Unrealistic expectations
- Pressured overachievers
- Staying connected is essential
- Strong demand for immediate feedback



Feedback

- Traditionalists – “No news is good news”
- Boomers – Feedback once a year
Lots of documentation
- Gen Xers – “Sorry to interrupt, but how am I doing?”
- Millennials - Feedback constantly



Feedback Style & Impact

- Feedback styles that may appear informative and helpful to one generation might seem formal and “preachy” to another
- Feedback an “Xer” thinks is immediate and honest can seem hasty or even inappropriate to other generations
- Some older generations have been told that there is a time and place for feedback. Younger generations haven’t necessarily been taught this “rule”.

Summary Questions for Reflection

1. Should curriculum design be influenced by generational characteristics?
2. Do millennials have different or more pressing needs and demands for academic and student services?
3. How will students differ in their choices of medical specialties? Will the trend for controllable lifestyle specialties continue?
4. How will the millennial values/characteristics influence residency programs?

Generations in Medicine

| TRADITIONALS | BOOMERS | GEN X | MILLENNIALS |
|---|---|---|--|
| Emeritus and high-level senior faculty | Senior and midcareer faculty and fill most of the leadership positions within the school | Junior faculty and housestaff | Younger housestaff and medical students |
| More willing to conform to work assignments and requests for long hours ; accustomed to hierarchical organizations; generally loyal to employer | Historically been willing to work long hours when young to achieve their dreams of prosperity | Believe in work – life balance; are setting boundaries on their work; tend to see themselves as “free-agents”, not reluctant to move for a perceived better offer | Work flexibly anywhere, but I need complete access to information and the answer to “why”? |
| | Work work work, it's what we're about. | Work. Work more with flexibility. Work even more? Let's talk. | Work anytime, on my terms. Work even more? That is so lame. I'm texting all my friends to tell them how lame you are.” |



Resources

- Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation
- Do generational differences matter in instructional design
- When Generations Collide
- Generations at Work
- IAMSE Webcast Series
- “Comparing Millennial and Generation X Medical Students at One Medical School” Nicole J. Borges, PhD, R. Stephen Manuel, PhD, Carol L. Elam, EdD, and Bonnie J. Jones, PhD, *Academic Medicine*, Vol. 81, No. 6/ June 2006
- “Multigenerational Challenges in Academic Medicine: UC Davis’s Responses” Lydia Pleotis Howell, MD, Gregg Servis and Ann Bonham, PhD